

In the Matter of)
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The Commission's Rules) WT Docket No. 01-309
Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones)
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I support the Hearing Loss Association's submission and respectfully request that the FCC determine that the hearing aid compatibility obligations in Part 20 DO apply to all mobile computing devices.

It is also impossible for advocacy experts to address the volume of comments requested by various committees. Yet, the barriers will never be eliminated without such comments. Regulations ensure that new products contain appropriate access without the constant need for comments by the various organizations for people with disabilities. When these regulations are in place it is imperative that the FCC not allow continuous exemptions and therefore erode what has already been accomplished.

The regulations have become minimum standards. Few companies exceed these minimum standards and many companies choose to use the standards as what is the least amount of access that they have to provide to sell their product. On many occasions at these meetings, these standards were viewed

with disdain and as obstacle for vendors rather than as an opportunity to meet their customers needs. It is disheartening but a reality that very few companies will ensure their products are accessible to people with disabilities without appropriate mandates.

The workplace has also become more and more technical and new products must be accessible. High unemployment figures cannot be overcome when barriers prevent a person from functioning in the office on an equal basis. The repeat occurrence of these barriers reinforces the feeling of hopelessness among people with hearing loss. Is this the message that we want to send to people with hearing loss?

The recent release of Apple's iPhone is a perfect example of new technology that is not appropriately accessible to people with hearing loss. How can a company who invested a fortune to develop state of the art technology not ensure that their product is accessible to people with hearing loss?

But Apple is not alone. This issue is also true for cell phones in the G.S.M. network. G.S.M phones only meet the MINIMUM standards unlike the phones in the C.D.M.A. network that meet the maximum standard. This is unacceptable. Yet, without these standards, would the G.S.M. carriers have even met the minimum standards?

We must put an end to companies seeking exemptions from regulations that were designed to protect people with disabilities. All products must be accessible to people with disabilities. Just as racial discrimination is not tolerated nor should inaccessible products. Inaccessible products are a civil rights violation and this can no longer be tolerated.

As such, I respectfully request that the FCC NOT grant such a waiver.

Yours sincerely,

Janice L. Schacter